

Amendments to the claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (original) A sub-genomic viral replicon comprising:
 - (a) a nucleic acid construct encoding chimeric HCV nonstructural protein, and
 - (b) an NS5B polymerase gene.
2. (original) A replicon of claim 1 wherein the NS5B polymerase gene is from an HCV strain and linked in *cis* to a 3'UTR from said strain.
3. (currently amended) A replicon of claim 1 ~~or 2~~ wherein the chimeric nonstructural proteins comprise a protein selected from the group consisting of NS3, NS4A, NS4B, NS5A, and NS5B.
4. (currently amended) A replicon of claim 1 ~~or 2~~ comprising an NS3 nucleotide sequence that encodes the first 75 contiguous N-terminal amino acids of the NS3 of genotype 1b, of a BB7 strain.
5. (currently amended) A replicon of claim 1 ~~or 2~~ wherein the NS3 N-terminal nucleotide sequence comprises

ATGGCGCCTATTACGGCCTACTCCCAACAGACGCGAGGCCTACTTGGC
TGCATCATCACTAGCCTCACAGGCCGGGACAGGAACCAGGTCTGAGGG
GGAGGTCCAAGTGGTCTCCACCGCAACACAATCTTTCCTGGCGACCTG
CGTCAATGGCGTGTGTTGGACTGTCTATCATGGTGCCGGCTCAAAGAC
CCTTGCCGGCCCAAAGGGCCCAATCACCCAAATG [SEQ ID NO:1].

6. (original) A replicon of claim 4 wherein said NS3 N-terminal nucleotide sequence replaces the N-terminal first 225 nucleotides of an NS3 from any of six major HCV genotypes selected from the group consisting of HCV genotype 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.
7. (original) A replicon of claim 6 wherein the NS3 is from HCV genotype 1a.
8. (original) A replicon of claim 7 wherein the HCV genotype 1a is from an H77 strain.
9. (original) A sub-genomic viral replicon comprising:
 - (a) a nucleic acid construct encoding chimeric HCV nonstructural proteins, and
 - (b) at least the C-terminal end of a strain specific NS5B polymerase gene linked in *cis* to a 3'UTR sequence from said strain.
10. (original) A replicon of claim 9 wherein the chimeric nonstructural proteins comprise a protein selected from the group consisting of NS3, NS4A, NS4B, NS5A, and NS5B.
11. (original) A replicon of claim 9 comprising an NS3 nucleotide sequence that encodes about the first 75 contiguous N-terminal amino acids of the NS3 of genotype 1b, of a BB7 strain.
12. (original) A replicon of claim 9 wherein the NS3 N-terminal nucleotide sequence comprises

ATGGCGCCTATTACGGCCTACTCCCAACAGACGCGAGGCCTACTTGGC
TGCATCATCACTAGCCTCACAGGCCGGGACAGGAACCAGGTCGAGGG
GGAGGTCCAAGTGGTCTCCACCGCAACACAATCTTTCCTGGCGACCTG

CGTCAATGGCGTGTGTTGGACTGTCTATCATGGTGCCGGCTCAAAGAC
CCTTGCCGGCCCAAAGGGCCCAATCACCCAAATG [SEQ ID No:1].

13. (original) A replicon of claim 11 wherein said NS3 N-terminal nucleotide sequence replaces the N-terminal first 225 nucleotides of an NS3 from any of six major HCV genotypes selected from the group consisting of HCV genotype 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6.
14. (original) A replicon of claim 13 wherein the NS3 is from HCV genotype 1b.
15. (original) A replicon of claim 14 wherein the NS3, genotype 1b, is from a J4 strain.
16. (original) A sub-genomic viral replicon comprising SEQ ID NO:2, SEQ ID NO:6, SEQ ID NO:7, or SEQ ID NO:8.
17. (original) A method of generating a cell comprising a replicating chimeric sub-genomic viral replicon, said method comprising introducing said chimeric replicon into a cell.
18. (original) A cell comprising a replicating chimeric sub-genomic viral replicon.
19. (original) The cell of claim 18 wherein the HCV sub-genomic replicon comprises all of the non-structural HCV genes and none of the structural HCV genes.
20. (currently amended) A method of screening for compounds that modulate viral replication comprising the steps of:
 - a) administering a test compound to a cell of claims 18-~~or 19~~,
 - and
 - b) determining whether said test compound modulates the replication of said chimeric replicon.

21. (currently amended) A method of screening for compounds that inhibit viral replication comprising the steps of
- a) administering a test compound to a cell of claims 18-~~or~~ 19, and
 - b) determining whether said test compound inhibits the replication of said chimeric sub-genomic viral replicon.